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INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3153
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2500
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3721
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2007
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STATE FOR NEA/ELA - SOMERSET, NEA/PPD, R, INR/R/MR
INR-PARENT
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
LONDON/POL
PARIS/POL

WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
USCENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Lebanon: Media Reaction, February 29, 2008

Atmospherics:

Most media outlets, even pro-March 14 outlets, seemed to believe that moving the U.S.S. Cole nearer to the Lebanese Coast will only add to the already complicated situation inside Lebanon. They noted that, contrary to a number of statements by U.S. officials, that the presence of the U.S.S. Cole is in fact a political message of regional dimensions. Most media outlets went into detail about when and how the U.S.S. Cole was dispatched, reminding their audience that this is the third time in the last 50 years that the United States has moved its navy ships nearer to the Lebanese coast.

Pro-March 8 outlets were aggressive in their comments about what they believe the goals of having the U.S.S. Cole moved to the coast were. They claimed that the U.S. wants to escalate the intensity of its strong and hot messages to Syria, to terrorize Hizballah and Syria's allies in Lebanon, and to encourage Israel to commit additional massacres in Gaza.

News about the U.S.S. Cole did not prevent several media outlets from highlighting the "continuous Israeli massacres" in Gaza "which did not even spare nursing babies." Most media outlets carried a moving photograph of a young Palestinian father carrying his dead baby in his arms, oblivious of people surrounding him and looking at his son with infinite sadness. Some Lebanese media outlets criticized Arab leaders' silence over the massacres, particularly Saudi King Abdullah and Egyptian President Mubarak "who did not bat an eyelash."

Selected Headlines:

"An American Navy Missile Destroyer Along the Lebanese Coast; Washington Justifies This Step By 'Protecting Regional Stability'"
Moderate, anti-Syrian An-Nahar

"U.S. Destroyer Cole in Lebanese Waters To Terrorize The Resistance, Syria, and the Summit! Washington Transcends the Presidential Game To Direct Military Threat" Arab nationalist As-Safir

"America Repeats its 1982 Adventure" Pro-opposition Al-Akhbar

"Washington Moves An American Destroyer Towards the Lebanese Coast"
Centrist Al-Anwar

"US.S. Cole in Lebanon and Aoun is Not Concerned" Independent
Al-Balad

Block Quotes:

"In Order to Protect Gaza from the Blood Bath," an editorial by
Aouni Al-Ka'ki in pro-Hariri Ash-Sharq (2/29):

"24 martyrs in 24 hours. The injured Gaza is about to drown in a
sea of blood and is living under fire. What is more dangerous from
Israeli aggression is the division among the Palestinians which
allowed Israel to launch such a bloody attack against the
Palestinian people. ...This Palestinian blood should unite the
Palestinian people because they cannot confront Israel without
unity..."

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